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House Passes Extension of Benefits to Help Millions of Unemployed Workers Over Republican Opposition

Washington, DC - Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) issued the following statement, following the House of Representatives' passage of unemployment benefits. The House passed this legislation (272-152), and President Obama immediately signed it into law. During consideration, Senate Republicans repeatedly blocked the extension of unemployment benefits.

The failed policies of the Bush Administration created this recession, wiping out 8 million jobs and \$17 trillion in retirement savings and net worth. Extending unemployment benefits would restore assistance to an estimated 2.5 million struggling Americans until November 30, 2010.

"Since the onset of this devastating recession, middle class families have paid the price, especially the millions of Americans who lost their jobs through no fault of their own. Families hit by job losses have depended on unemployment benefits for simple necessities - such as food, clothing, medicine, housing, and other basics.

"While Americans search for jobs, unemployment benefits keep families from hardship and in some cases falling into absolute poverty. This safety net isn't designed to replace a steady paycheck but rather keep families afloat.

"Extending unemployment not only helps those out of work, but it will also stimulate the U.S. economy - an opportunity Congress can't afford to lose. Unemployment benefits created over one million jobs since the onset of the recession. According to the Economic Policy Institute, unemployment benefits added almost 2 percent to the GDP. Furthermore, for every dollar spent on unemployment benefits, \$1.61 is created in economic activity.

"Republicans' refusal to help the unemployed Americans has only exacerbated the uncertainty for families struggling through no fault of their own. My Republican colleagues have been too busy playing politics to understand the pain and suffering families face when jobs and basic benefits are denied to them. Republicans aren't acting out of principle but rather playing politics with people's lives."

Congresswoman Betty McCollum serves on the House Appropriations and Budget Committees.

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